

With the author's kind regards.

PLAIN WORDS FOR PLAIN PEOPLE.

The Future Destiny of the Unsaved,

Being an inquiry or brief reply (in five letters) to two lectures delivered in "David Morrice Hall," Canada Presbyterian College, by Rev. Professor Shaw, M.A., of the Wesleyan College, and Rev. Professor McLaren, D. D., of Knox College, Toronto.

(Principal MacVicar, L.L.D., in the Chair.)

By ENQUIRER.

My silence is not for the want of appreciation of the ability and courtesy with which the letters are written.

REV. PROFESSOR SHAW.

It is of the utmost consequence what a man believes, and what creed a church holds, yet truth has much more to fear from creeds, which Christians do not believe, than from the utmost freedom of discussion.

Montreal Witness. January 5th, 1885.

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MONTREAL, 1885.

Nothing but God and that which pleases him can permanently exist.

ARCHBISHOP THOMPSON.

If Christianity has any human basis, it is its entire reasonableness.

REV. THEO. T. MUNGER, D. D.

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plentous in mercy.

He will not contend for ever, neither will He retain his anger to eternity.

Psalm 103. 8-9.

PLAIN WORDS FOR PLAIN PEOPLE.

LETTER NO. I.

Within a few months we have had two lectures on the future destiny of the wicked, at the David Morrice Hall—one by the Rev. J. Edgar Hill, M.A., of St. Andrew's Church, and the other by Professor Shaw, of the Wesleyan Theological College. The former believes that all punishment is remedial, and the latter that it is penal, and endless in its duration. The lecture on Sunday was able and eloquent, but it seemed to me that the conclusions reached were neither exgetically nor logically correct. The Professor has evidently read and thought much upon the subject, but I was a little surprised and disappointed to hear him dismiss with a few words only what I (and most others who have given any attention to the subject) regard as the strongest argument against the endlessness of the future punishment of the lost—I refer to what is now generally designated "Conditional Immortality," the chief promoters and defenders of which are the Revs. Edward White and Samuel Minton, M. A., of London, and the Rev. W. R. Dale, LL.D., of Birmingham, England, successor to the late excellent John Angell James. The position taken with regard to this doctrine is that, according to the Genesis' account of the creation and fall of man, he is not naturally immortal, or that he lost his claim or right to immortality by the fall, therefore his punishment cannot extend beyond the limit of his existence or conscious being. Sometimes this doctrine is called annihilation, and its promoters annihilationists, but these terms are incorrect and misleading, for they believe that all will be punished according to the demerit of their sins, and then go away into "everlasting destruction." Be "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord." Those who hold this view, believe firmly that it is supported by abundant Scripture proof, which I could easily give if your space would allow it. I think the worthy Professor is mistaken when he says that if the orthodox view be given up, the

other doctrines and even the authority of Holy Scripture will soon follow. So far as I know, this has not been the case, for where will you find more godly men, more sincere, earnest and useful ministers of the Gospel, or more able defenders and expounders of the Bible than the three clergymen already named? (I might also add Dr. Joseph Parker, of the City Temple, London, Rev. Arthur Mursell, and many others.) Rev. Edward White was lately elected Chairman of the London Association of Congregational Ministers, and churches, a very honorable position which but few attain to. He was also lately chosen to deliver the "Merchants' Lectures" at Weigh-house Chapel,—the late Rev. Thomas Binney's. His lectures were in substance a defence of the New Testament Scriptures and of Orthodox doctrines, and yet he does not believe in the endless torments of the lost, and his brethern knew this well, when they placed him in these honorable positions. I wonder whether Prof. Shaw ever read his book, "Life in Christ," containing upwards of 500 pages? It seems passing strange to me that he should have spent so much time with Canon Farrar, who no where, either in his "Eternal Hope," or "Mercy and Judgment," affirms that he does not believe in eternal punishment, while Mr. White has written his book to prove the doctrine untrue and unscriptural, besides preaching against it for thirty years in the same church. And it is well known that his view is rapidly spreading among thoughtful christians of all denominations in England, and not a few able Ministers believe it and preach it to their congregations without let or hindrance, hence my surprise that Prof. Shaw should have passed it by with only a single remark or two. Those who hold this view reject both Universalism and Restorationism as being untenable on Scriptural grounds, but they hold firmly that they have ample grounds for their faith, in the declarations of Jesus and Paul, while the Old Testament Scriptures are utterly silent on the subject of "Eternal Punishment."

Although the Professor failed to remove my doubts, I greatly admired his calm reasoning and Christian spirit, and would much like to hear him devote a whole lecture or more to answering Mr. White's book. While Dorner, perhaps, is the father of this part of the "New Theology," he is less definite and less clear in his reasoning on the subject than White and must not be regarded as the champion among those who advocate this view.

There are many like the great essayist, John Foster, who are unable to reconcile the doctrine of the endless torment of the lost, with the infinite beneficence, justice and fatherhood of God, and consequently they either reject or doubt it; such persons would be thankful for more light. It did appear to me that the Professor also passed over this very important point somewhat too briefly and too lightly, and consequently unsatisfactorily to his doubting hearers. However, the subject was too great for one lecture, and but few men could have done better in the short time allotted to him. It was somewhat strange that St. Paul was almost entirely ignored in the lecture. In his writings he alludes to the future destiny of the wicked upwards of twenty different times; but in none of them does he either affirm or imply that they will suffer endless conscious punishment. A careful examination of his statements on this awful subject will show any unprejudiced reader that he and Prof. Shaw are not agreed. The terms the great apostle and other New Testament writers use when alluding to the punishment of the lost, are "perish," "destroy," and "destruction." Is it not an abuse of language to force these terms to mean endless, conscious misery? Let us remember, however, that "God will by no means clear the guilty."

The Professor's statements (for arguments we cannot call them) with reference to the endless torment of near relatives and friends, while we ourselves, that is if we die Christians, are enjoying ourselves in Heaven, must be passed by as utterly unworthy of notice; it is too horrible to think of for a moment! Then, how with his views of conversion, and of the malignant nature and far-reaching consequences of sin, and considering the present condition of our race—heathen and Christian nations—he can be assured that the great majority of men will be saved, is more than I can understand.

As a public teacher and preacher I think this statement calls for some explanation. I am afraid he is conscience-driven to such an opinion as a comforting antidote and offset to his belief in eternal torment. I think, however, he is correct, but how he can believe it, holding the views he does, puzzles me. Notwithstanding, it is a delightful thought and one which I believe will be fully realized.

One who was many years in the ministry, and who is now no more, once said if he thought the doctrine of eternal tor-

ment were true he would never smile again, and the good and great John Foster said that if he could believe that any of his friends were in hopeless and endless suffering, if saved himself, it would make him weep on the plains of Heaven; and yet many of our friends here, who profess to believe it, eat and drink and smile and enjoy themselves just as if they were sure all their relatives and friends were in Heaven. How is this?

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LETTER NO. II.

Having sent THE HERALD containing letter No. I to Professor Shaw, I have waited some days hoping he might favor us with a few words by way of explanation, or reply, as we need more light on this very solemn and important subject. Not having heard from him, I proceed with a second letter, which I hope may not be without some degree of interest.

A TERRIFIC DOCTRINE.

The future destiny of the unsaved is now one of the most absorbing questions of the day, and but few pastors of churches would proclaim as in past times the doctrine that the glory of God will be, or is now being promoted, by keeping millions of souls in helpless and hopeless misery for ever. This is very rarely preached from our pulpits now, and may we not hope that it is not taught to the students in our colleges? An aged and godly Methodist woman of the old school remarked to me some days ago that "these dreadful things were not so often preached about in Methodist pulpits and churches now-a-days, and she was glad of it." The remark would also apply to the churches of other denominations. The pews may listen to an occasional and passing remark on the eternal damnation of the lost, but clergymen well know that there would soon be a quick thinning out process going on in their pews and churches were they to preach these doctrines now with the same positiveness and vehemence as formerly. I was glad to hear that Professor Shaw is somewhat milder and broader in his views than some other Professors, notwithstanding his belief in the eternal duration of the punishment of the unsaved.

AN INTERMEDIATE STATE.

He affirms that there is an *intermediate* state, by which, I suppose, we are to understand that the souls of the lost do not go directly to hell at death, but after the resurrection and judgment day. Even this is better, and I hope, more Scriptural, for if this be the correct view millions of souls have

now been in this intermediate state for several thousand years, and may remain there for some thousands more, instead of being in hell, as we have been taught. Although the Professor rejects the idea of mitigation after the judgment day, his views with regard to an intermediate state give some relief, and they are more easily reconciled with our sense of justice. If there is no such state, then some of the unsaved would have to suffer thousands of years longer than others. There would be a vast difference in duration between those who were lost at the time of the "flood" and those lost now or in future ages. But what saith the Scriptures on this point? Would like to have heard the Professor's reasons for said belief with proof from the Holy Scriptures. I presume that he is not quite orthodox on this point according to the Wesleyan or Westminster standards. Principal MacVicar, however, did not put in any objection, as he did to the views of Rev. J. Edgar Hill on the occasion of his lectures. The Professor's views on this point are, I believe, rapidly gaining ground in the old country.

ONLY ONE SHORT LIFE.

Endless conscious suffering for the sins of one short life, and that life surrounded with temptations and with a nature tending to evil from childhood, does not strike one as being according to righteousness, and most assuredly, with the exception of two or three passages, it seems contrary to the trend of the whole Bible, when fairly and correctly interpreted according to the common laws of language and of interpretation. For my part, I cannot see why Scripture terms, when theologically explained, should have a different meaning from that given by Webster and Walker. The terms life, death, perish, destroy, and destruction, it seems to me, should be understood to mean theologically just what they mean anywhere else, and not something quite different. Should we not accept the facts and statements of Scripture in their first and most obvious meaning, and read and explain the Bible as we would any other book?

LIFE AND DEATH.

He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath *not* life.—I. John, 5, 12. The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal *life*.—Rom. 6, 24. In these, as in many other passages, life and death stand in

direct contrast with each other—life means life, and death means death. The death of a sinner means the destruction of life after resurrection and judgment—after due punishment has been received, for God will by no means clear the guilty. But as God's mercy is infinite and "endureth for ever," he may have many potent agencies at work here and hereafter, in the intermediate state of which we have no certain knowledge, and by which he is working out the salvation of those who have neglected themselves and who have not used the means of grace given to them, and therefore this eternal life may be bestowed on innumerable multitudes of those who were while in this world inaccessible to human instrumentalities and human agencies. 1 Peter, 3. 19.

A SLIGHT DIFFERENCE ONLY.

Professor Shaw made a passing allusion to the very slight moral difference there is between the *best* sinner and the *worst* saint. We all know well enough, that the difference as far as we are able to judge, is often greatly in favor of the former. Would the Professor then send him to an endless hell of suffering, and the other to endless bliss in heaven! Would that be fair or just? And yet this is the doctrine held by the worthy Professor. If none are saved but those who are "converted" in an evangelical sense, what becomes of the thousands we meet daily in our streets, and many of those who work in our factories, dig our sewers, and scrape our streets, whose life strength is spent in earning the bare necessities of life? Do they go down to the pit of endless misery?

ETERNITY OF EVIL.

I know that your valuable space is very limited to discussions of this kind, so that I can only glance at this point, which, however, is a very important one. If the suffering of the lost is eternal, then evil is eternal. I use the word eternal in the sense of endlessness, although it does not always carry that meaning when used in the Holy Scriptures. Does Professor Shaw believe in the eternity of evil, and does he teach his students that doctrine? Has evil any natural place in the universe? Would he dignify it with one of the essential attributes of the divine Creator? Is it at all probable, judging from what we know of His benign character, that the Almighty will allow any of his creatures to remain in

eternal rebellion and misery? I know that we are assured in His holy word that "His thoughts are not our thoughts and His ways are not our ways," but then are we to suppose that He is less loving and less merciful than we are? God forbid! We must also suppose, and indeed believe, that God's designs and purposes relating to man are never vindictive, or merely penal, but gracious and merciful. Punishment which is *endless* would be against His nature, and law of working, and therefore could answer no good end. We are at a loss to conceive of any motive for the eternal perpetuation of evil of any kind, but what motive could actuate a Being who is infinite in power and mercy to permit the evil of eternal sin and sorrow and woe to millions of our race? His motives like His purposes, are all pure, just and good, but we can discover no good or useful motive in keeping millions of human souls in endless misery or of perpetuating evil of any kind for ever.

THE FINAL TRIUMPH OF GOOD.

Will not good finally triumph; or how can "God be all in all?" Eternal suffering means the triumph of evil over good. For myself I cannot but believe that good will finally triumph over ill, and that at some period in the future no evil will exist in God's universe, when all sin and suffering shall cease. May God hasten it in His time.

As I and many others are seeking light on the points indicated in these letters, may we not hope that Professor Shaw will kindly find time to answer them. His lecture, as I have said, was able and eloquent, and was listened to with great interest, to the last word. The following orthodox lines on hymn papers are being sung at the Lord Cecil and Mace meetings in the Albert Hall and in other places of this city:—

"The foolish doomed to hell beneath

"Shall weep and wail, and gnash their teeth,

"*Where torments never die.*"

"Hell is darkness, deep and awful,

"Hell is fire forever burning

"Hell is deep, without a bottom!"

LETTER NO. III.

Being out of town I had not the privilege of hearing Professor McLaren's lecture, in the David Morrice Hall, on "Conditional Immortality," or what those on the other side prefer to call Life in Christ. Neither was I aware until a day or two ago that Professor Shaw had kindly, if briefly, replied to my letters in THE HERALD. I beg to thank him for the compliment, in acknowledging that his "silence was not owing to a want of appreciation of the ability and courtesy with which they were written." Discussions on such subjects by the professed followers of our Lord Jesus Christ should always be conducted in a Christ-like spirit, and with the "meekness of wisdom." In referring to the letter and lecture of the worthy Professors, I must once more protest against the use of the term "annihilation," because as I have already said it is misleading and not believed in by those who hold to the doctrine of life in Christ only, any more than it is by the Professors themselves. It was therefore uncandid and unfair in them to use it in such connection, for they surely must have known that what I now write is correct. The advocates of the doctrine of life in Christ are not annihilationists; please don't forget this point.

Professor Shaw acknowledges that he did not give much attention to the doctrine of "Conditional Immortality" in his lecture, because he did not think it very important, but the authorities of the college and Principal McVicar too thought otherwise, and doubtless felt that the omission was so remarkable and important that they sent for Prof. McLaren from Toronto to supply the lack by devoting a whole lecture to the subject. Probably they sent for him because they knew that he would be well posted on these matters, having taken a somewhat prominent part in the Rev. D. J. Macdonnell affair several years ago, when an unsatisfactory compromise was gladly accepted. They would think twice before trying such a thing again in these days.

Then, as to construing Dr. McVicar's silence into consent concerning the intermediate state, I had no wish to convey such an impression, but as he was so prompt and decided in

expressing his dissent on the occasion of Rev. Mr. Hill's lecture, it was rather natural to suppose that, as he said nothing by way of dissent, that he was not opposed to it. The doctrine of an intermediate state seems to me to have a direct bearing on that of endless torment, and, therefore, should hardly be regarded, especially by Professors in Theological colleges, as a "very secondary" matter, that is, as to whether we believe in it or not. Dr. McVicar and his denomination it seems *do not* believe in it. Prof. Shaw says that he and his denomination *do* believe in it, so then here, there is a very serious difference. But they are united in the belief that the unsaved, however greatly they may differ in character, or however different their privileges and circumstances in life, must and will suffer *equally* as far as the *duration* of their punishment is concerned. Does such a doctrine seem just or equal? In our Courts of Justice—*human* courts—the *length* of the term of imprisonment is always proportioned to the nature of the crime.

But as the Principal and the Professor differ in opinion with regard to the intermediate state of the lost, the one believing that they are *now* suffering "the vengeance of eternal fire," and the other that they will not do so until after the resurrection and the judgment. Now, I ask, when some of the unsaved have been dead several thousand years and some only several days, how can they both be consistently correct? The disagreement between the two, far from being a matter of "minor consequence," is almost as great and important as that between Professor Shaw and the advocates of life in Christ. I will leave them and your readers to reconcile the difference as they best can.

The Professor, like many other good men, believes that when ministers of the Gospel "cease to warn men to flee from the wrath to come" "the moral power of the pulpit" will then terminate. "I think there are two mistakes here which are very common among orthodox Christians. The first is this: That ministers who do not believe in the *endless* conscious suffering of the unsaved, do not, and cannot, warn men of "the wrath to come." This is a very serious mistake, and great injustice is often done to good ministers of Jesus Christ, by thus misrepresenting them and their preaching. They *do* believe in "the wrath to come." They *do* believe that the punishment of the wicked

will be severe, because they believe the Bible to be the word of God, and they there find it stated that He will "by no means clear the guilty," and that "God is not mocked, that whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." They truly believe this doctrine, and preach it as faithfully and as earnestly as those who preach "everlasting punishment." Do not then misrepresent those who are "laborers together with Christ," by stating or insinuating that they do not warn men to flee from "the wrath to come."

The second mistake is this—That "the moral power of the pulpit will terminate" when ministers cease to preach the doctrine of endless torment. Does the *power* of the pulpit depend upon this? Surely not! The only difference between the orthodox and the unorthodox, on the point in discussion is not as to the *nature* of the punishment, for both believe the wicked will be punished, but simply as to the length or duration of it. Both believe firmly that they are right according to the Scriptures, then is it likely that the *power*, that is the usefulness, the effectiveness of the pulpit as a means of conversion, and of saving men from a life of sin will be all on one side? The power of the pulpit I should think rests with the Holy Spirit, being in the man who preaches, energizing him and purifying his heart, taking of the things of Christ," and in thus helping him to preach. Take as a few examples Rev. D. J. Macdonnell, of Toronto, Dr. Joseph Parker, of the City Temple, London, Rev. J. W. Dale LL. D. of Birmingham, (names mentioned before) where will you find more "pulpit power" than in these pulpits, and where will you find more just or useful ministers of the Gospel than these? They are not only a power in the pulpit, but they are a power out of it, and all around, as every true minister of Christ should be. The power of animal fear cannot be the power of the pulpit. I write with all seriousness when I say that the vehement and persistent preaching of hell torments has done more to weaken the pulpit, to alienate the people, and to prejudice thoughtful men (especially young men) against the Churches and against Christianity than anything else. The sooner these things are pondered by ministers and the Professors in our colleges the better. If they are not, they will find their students greatly in advance of them some day, if some of them are not already.

Then, as to not discussing these matters in "secular" papers where, then, are we to discuss them? There is not a *religious*

paper in all this broad land that would admit a single letter on the subject we are writing about! And there is scarcely a bookseller who will sell a book or pamphlet on the subject. But the time is fast approaching when it will be otherwise; at least I hope so. Does not the great love of God, our Heavenly Father, and the holy gospel plan of salvation, present motives sufficiently strong and good to influence men to repent and come to Christ for salvation, without giving the motive of fear so large and unnatural a place as to have it dished out to you, every Sunday, as Prof. Shaw says it is, at the church where he worships?

Is it not fixing an unauthorized limit to the glorious Gospel and degrading to the intellect and good sense of the hearers, thus to make so prominent a doctrine that can only be of secondary importance, and upon which there is such a wide difference of opinion among equally good and learned men?

But this letter is already too long; I must leave the paragraph relating to "life" and "death" and Professor McLaren's lecture for my next.

LETTER NO. IV.

My last letter did not find its way to your office; I suppose like some others, it was lost or mislaid at the Post Office. With reference to the lectures of the two Professors on the foregoing subject, I suppose we may fairly presume that they brought forth their strongest arguments in favor of the traditional or orthodox side of the question?

As I intimated in my last letter that both lecturers fell into the mistake, in taking it for granted that the advocates of life in Christ were out and out annihilationists, therefore while they aimed at demolishing the latter, they left the former untouched. So their "life" and "death" arguments count for nothing. Prof. McLaren was opposed to the views held by those on the other side, because, as he said, they "did not agree with the record of Genesis." Well, let us see whether they do or not, because on this point hangs the whole question. Is man naturally immortal?

Was man created immortal or with "a never dying soul?"

There is only one safe rule in interpreting holy Scripture, and that is that it should be so interpreted as to be in harmony with itself; or that one part should not contradict another. In Genesis (a book which we believe to be authentic history and not an allegory) chapter ii. v. 7, we read, "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed in his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." Now I ask your readers and the Professors also, whether they can fairly extract the idea of natural immortality from this passage? It is quite evident, I think, that the idea sought to be conveyed is simply that *after* man was "formed of the dust of the ground," he became animated with life by the breath of his Creator—that is all. V. 9—There was "the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the midst of the garden." V. 16, 17—"And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, of every tree in the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Is not that sufficiently plain? He did eat of it and he died also. Then in

chap. iii. 5. 19, as the penalty of his disobedience, we read, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return." "So he drove out the man lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life" and eat and live forever." Do not these and other passages from Genesis plainly show that Adam's living for ever, or in other words his immortality, depended entirely upon his obedience? And that the penalty of his disobedience was death—death in the common and ordinary sense of the term, of the whole man, and not eternal life in hell? Is there the slightest modicum of proof that Adam understood the sentence in the latter sense? Or was it possible that for any reason the Divine and beneficent Creator would conceal from Adam the orthodox and most terrible part of the sentence? How then can we, judging from the words of Holy Scripture, come to any other conclusion than that his immortality was entirely conditional upon his obedience? He was disobedient and fell, consequently the doctrine of eternal punishment has no foundation in the word of God, for the sufferings of the lost could not extend beyond the limit of existence, or conscious being. "The utmost said of him, is that he became a "living creature," a phrase frequently applied to the animal creation."* If additional proof of this were needed, many other passages might be cited from various parts of the Old and New Testament Scriptures showing that the doctrine of life in Christ only is quite in harmony with the whole Bible

But it is said that man was "created in the image of God," and that "his creation indicated the duality of his nature." With both these statements we agree, but there is nothing in them proving or indicating that either part of man was immortal, by nature or creation. By the "image of God" is doubtless meant His *moral* image, as we are informed that "in righteousness and holiness created He him." The terms have clearly no reference whatever to the eternity of the Divine nature, and therefore that which is regarded as the chief argument for the immortality of the soul, like all others in that direction, falls to the ground.

Professor McLaren remarked that the execution of the penalty appeared to have fallen directly upon the *soul*. This

* Rev. Ed. White.

seems to me to be an error, but if not, then the argument derived from it is directly against him, for as the Word plainly states that *death* was the penalty of disobedience, then it must be the death of the soul. As corroborative evidence, we give the following passage, culled from many others:—"The *soul* that sinneth it shall die." But we do not believe that the penalty fell chiefly upon the soul, for suffering and death to the *body* was a very sad and important part of the penalty, as we all know by painful experience. Body and soul combined form the man, and both suffer death as the penalty of sin, according to the Scriptures. That is, after the resurrection and judgment, they shall "go away into everlasting destruction." This view is in perfect accord with the whole of the Old Testament Scriptures, but while their complete silence with regard to the immortality of the soul is very significant, I would not lay much stress on that point, for there is abundant proof for the opposite view without it, but if the doctrine of unending torment had been true, surely Moses and the prophets would have said something about it. Then again, St. Paul, and I suppose we all regard him as a high authority on matters of theology and religion, plainly accepts and defends the unorthodox views, as given in the record of the book of Genesis. He says: "The wages of sin is death." Rom. VI, 23. "Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned." Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression (Rom. xii. 12-14). Plainly meaning infants and children of tender years, and perhaps those who are not responsible for their actions. Although they had not sinned, for they were not under the law, they became subject to death through Adam's transgression, and they have died by millions, the very same death as those of mature years. Will anyone say that they are suffering eternal punishment! Yet if we consistently and logically pursue the argument to the end, it leads us to this horrible conclusion.

But if, like St. Paul, we accept the views advocated by those on the other side, the matter is plain—life is life and death is death, and there can be no reasonable doubt but that both Adam and Paul understood the penalty of sin as recorded in Genesis in this plain sense. All through his Epistles St. Paul speaks of it in the same way, and often repeating the same terms to enforce his meaning.

I will at this point leave my readers, if they are interested in these matters, to judge whether the doctrine of endless punishment, or punishment that is not endless, agrees best with "the record of Genesis."

I think it will be plainly seen that the Holy Scriptures do not teach the doctrine of man's natural immortality, and that the phrases "immortal soul," "immortal spirit," "the undying soul," "everlasting misery," &c., so frequently used in sermons and religious exhortations, are not to be found in the word of God, and are consequently misleading to common hearers, and therefore ought not to be so employed. The human soul or spirit is spoken of "more than sixteen hundred times in the holy Scriptures, and never once is it called immortal, never dying, or deathless."* Would this remarkable omission have been possible, if the soul had been naturally immortal as our friends say it is? Is not the orthodox theory responsible for much of the mischief done by "Spiritualism," and by the dogma of purgatory and other kindred notions, by which tens of thousands are afflicted to-day? Take the term death and all other correlative terms, on this subject, in their simple Scriptural meaning, and you at once cut away the foundation and destroy the trade of those who deal in such perversions of the divine word.

It has been truly said by an able writer on this subject that the orthodox theory is based on the inadmissible assumption of the immortality of the soul. If it cannot be proven from the Word of God that the soul is immortal, then all other arguments are superfluous. Let our friends, the Professors of Knox College and of the Wesleyan College give special attention to this point, and if they can prove it from "the word and the testimony," then we shall give up, sorrowfully indeed but we have no fear in this regard, for we are fully satisfied that they would have their labor for their pains. Many of us in the past have been "wise above what is written," and it would be well for all to calmly and carefully re-examine the subject in the light of holy Scripture.

The two Professors are learned and able men, and as well, or better qualified than most of their Compeers to deal with this very solemn and interesting subject, but I do not think that they have made out a very good case. I was myself carefully trained, and as deeply entrenched in the orthodox view of the subject as most, but when I carefully examined it

* Rev S. Minton, M. A.

from the Bible standpoint, I was amazed to find how flimsy and unscriptural the arguments for the doctrine of the eternal misery of the unsaved were. I found it utterly untenable, that is, according to the Scriptures, and was compelled in conscience to give it up. If these letters do nothing else, I hope they will be the means of calling some attention to the subject, and of enquiry as to whether these things are so or not.

LETTER NO. V.

I think I have in previous letters, produced decisive evidence from the "record in Genesis" that our orthodox friends are not justified in speaking of man as an "immortal being." His living for ever, or, in other words, his immortality, was entirely dependent upon his obedience, and that his disobedience was followed by the infliction of the threatened penalty, death—the death of the whole man, body and soul. I also showed that this view of the penalty of Adam's transgression harmonizes with all that is said on the subject, both in the Old and New Testament Scriptures.

I will now glance at one or two other points, the first of which is, perhaps, the one most commonly used to prove that the punishment of the lost is everlasting misery. It is this. That sin being committed against an infinite Being is an infinite offence, and therefore requires infinite or eternal punishment. This may be good theology, but it is hardly good logic, and those who use it must be hard pressed for a good argument. I would not be quite so wicked as a certain clergyman, who said it was simply "infinite nonsense," and therefore called for no remarks or reply. Indeed, we need not wonder at their resorting to such methods outside the covers of the Bible, when they find so little within it to sustain their position. Do those who so earnestly and persistently advocate and defend the tenet of everlasting misery ever seriously think of its terrific and fearful import? Do they ever pause and try to comprehend, in ever so faint a way, the meaning of these terms? The unfeeling and half flippant way in which they are frequently used in the pulpit would seem to indicate that a negative answer would be the most suitable one to this question. You may try to think of thousands of millions of years, and millions of billions more, and then the end of their sufferings would be no nearer! It must continue without mitigation or alleviation, coupled with utter helplessness and black despair for ever, and for ever! Want you proof that this is no exaggeration from the orthodox standpoint? Hear then, what the *Westminster Confession of Faith* saith,—“The punishment of sin in the world to come

are most grievous torments, in soul and body, without intermission in hell fire for ever. * * * Shall be cast into hell to be punished with *unspeakable torments, both of body and soul, with the devil and his angels forever.*" "They who having never heard the Gospel, know not Jesus Christ, and believe not in him, cannot be saved, be they never so diligent, to frame their lives according to the light of nature." What becomes then of the 900,000,000 of the so called heathen, and of the hundreds of thousands of godless Christians? who pass out of time, about every thirty years (and whose numbers are constantly increasing) and whose places are being filled up by others, all marching on to a common future and a common doom! Unless they have a "better gospel" and "more moral power," in the means used, how can we expect many of them to be saved? Will they go down to the doom of endless misery! (This "Confession of Faith" is one of the standard works in all the Presbyterian colleges in this country!) All this dreadful torment is inflicted as a penalty for the occasional sins of one short human life. And committed by those who are ever surrounded with temptations to evil and with little within them naturally favorable to obedience or a virtuous life, so that comparatively few have moral nerve enough to master the temptations to which they are subject. Speak ye after this of the "*pulpit losing its moral power,*" if this hideous dogma be not frequently preached and shook over the heads of the people who attend our churches! I sincerely hope that our orthodox friends will give up this notion, and depend more upon Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit for success in saving men from sin and in bringing them to Christ. The truth is, the prominence given to what has been called "hell fire preaching," in past days, has been one of the chief reasons why so many intelligent and thoughtful people absent themselves from our churches. The revival of "free thought" and of agnosticism may also in part be attributable to this; indeed, there can be no doubt of it, that many have been driven into the other extreme of believing in no *future* punishment at all. Notwithstanding what Professor Shaw has said on this point, we are glad to know that much less prominence is given to this doctrine in the pulpit than formerly. This is doubtless giving preachers an increase of "moral power," and the higher doctrines of grace and mercy greater prominence.

Endless punishment strikes men as being so much out of all reasonable proportion to the offence that they cannot believe the doctrine to be true. But punishment that bears some just and fair proportion to the offence, and which is announced with definite clearness in the word of God and from the pulpit, they can understand and accept, hence the rapid spread of the doctrine of "Conditional Immortality" among Clergymen and the churches in England within the last few years. "The human understanding recoils from the accepted, (orthodox) view as incredible and unjust." *

WHY ACCEPTED.

In the past, men have accepted the doctrine of endless torment because they were religiously educated in it, and taught to believe that it was an essential part of the Christian religion. It has been taught by authority and accepted as true without enquiry, because of the learned source from whence it came. But now men enquire whether these things are so or not. They say, "We can see no good end to be served by punishing a sinner for ever; it looks vindictive." As the infinitely kind and wise Creator is always actuated by benevolent motives, we can discover no such motive in His committing any of his creatures to endless and hopeless sorrow. It shocks our sense of justice and right, and is very discordant with what we know of his character. If the punishment had been in any sense remedial, so that even after a very long period there would be some hope that the end would come, then it would be more like Him "whose mercy endureth forever." But what possible good can come of keeping a lost sinner in a dungeon for ever and ever? Conditional Immortality completely removes this well founded objection, and announces a penalty commensurate with the offence and which is more compatible with our sense of justice, and also of what we know of the nature and character of God our Creator.

But it is said that this view does not come up to the idea of the holy Scriptures with regard to the severity of the threatened punishment. To this I answer by asking: what do men regard as the greatest punishment for crime here? Is it not loss of life? Recently a sufferer in London readily and cheerfully submitted to a very painful operation for just one bare chance of saving his life. He had his skull opened and a tumour cut from the surface of the brain. What could be

* Rev. Arthur Mursell, B. A.

more critical or painful than that? Yet he endured it with cheerful courage when there was only one poor chance of saving his life.

A culprit in one of our Penitentiaries, who was condemned to be executed on a certain day, said he would cheerfully live in his lonely cell on bread and water, if they would only spare his life, especially if he could see his wife and children occasionally. "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life."

Well the punishment meted out to the *finally* impenitent will be the loss of life, and this implies the loss of the blessed life in heaven. With regard to the time and manner of the punishment, we leave that with the "Judge of all the earth, who will do right." "Help is laid upon one who is mighty to save." He can save "to the uttermost" all them that come to him, and such "he will in no wise cast out" And here we rest, and hope to end.

THE CENTRAL FACT.

The great leading fact of God's redemptive plan, was that through the Incarnation and Atonement of his Son Jesus Christ he might give LIFE to the world,—“life and immortality” to the individual man. Note here the following sayings of Jesus and others on this point:—

I am come that they may have *life*, John x. 10.

If any eat of this bread he shall live for ever, John, vi. 51.

Ye will not come to me that ye might have life, John v. 40.

If ye live after the flesh ye shall die, Rom. viii, 13.

The end of these things is death, Rom. vi, 21. He that believeth on me hath everlasting life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not *see life*, John iii, 36.

Narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and broad is the way that leadeth to *destruction*, Matt. vii, 13.

The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life, Rom. vi, 23.

He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever, John ii, 27.

This is the record that God hath given unto us, eternal life, and this life is in His Son, John v, 11.

Whosoever liveth and believeth on me, shall never die, John x, 26.

If a man keep my word, he shall never see death, John viii, 51.

Several of these sayings of Jesus, John and Paul have been given before, but they are so vital to the question at issue that they need to be repeated here. Take them, then, as they stand, in their plain common sense meaning, and what do we learn from them? Why, plainly that Christ came to give "everlasting life," or immortality, *only* to those who believe in him and obey him. The unbelieving and disobedient, die, perish, and are utterly destroyed, Acts iii, 23. "My mind fails to conceive a grosser misrepresentation of language than when the five or six strongest words, which the Greek tongue possesses, signifying destroy or destruction, are explained to mean an everlasting but wretched existence. To translate black as white is nothing to this." *

IMMORTALITY.

The terms immortal and immortality are only used some four or five times in the Bible, and they are never applied to man as indicating in any sense that he is naturally or necessarily immortal. On the contrary, it is distinctly stated that *God only hath immortality*, Tim. i, 17. Men are exhorted to *seek for* glory, honor, immortality and eternal life, Rom. ii, 7. But why seek for that which they have already in possession? It is then plain that "life and immortality" can only be obtained from Christ, when sought for. He is "the Way, the Truth and the Life." These facts agree entirely with the records in Genesis, so that Moses, Jesus, John and Paul are in perfect accord on this essential point.

REWARDS.

We fully believe that all men will be punished or "rewarded according to their works," as I have already affirmed, and we do not wish either to be misunderstood or misrepresented on this very solemn and important point. Christ died for all, and He invites all to come to Him and "live for ever." There may be hope for millions more than we dream of in the infinitude of God's mercy, and in the universal efficacy of the atonement of Christ. Who knows but that He has a thousand instrumentalities and agencies at work to snatch men as "brands from the burning," that we are ignorant of. He will not fail in accomplishing His great and beneficent purposes of grace, and He is not in any sense dependent upon human

* Dr. Weymouth, head master, Mill Hill School, England.

means in carrying out His designs of mercy and compassion to the children of men. For my own part, I would a thousand times sooner credit "the Larger Hope," with

TENNYSON

and

FARRAR,

than I would believe and accept the doctrine of endless misery. It is more humane and Christ-like, and more in consonance with what we see of God in nature and providence, all around us and everywhere.

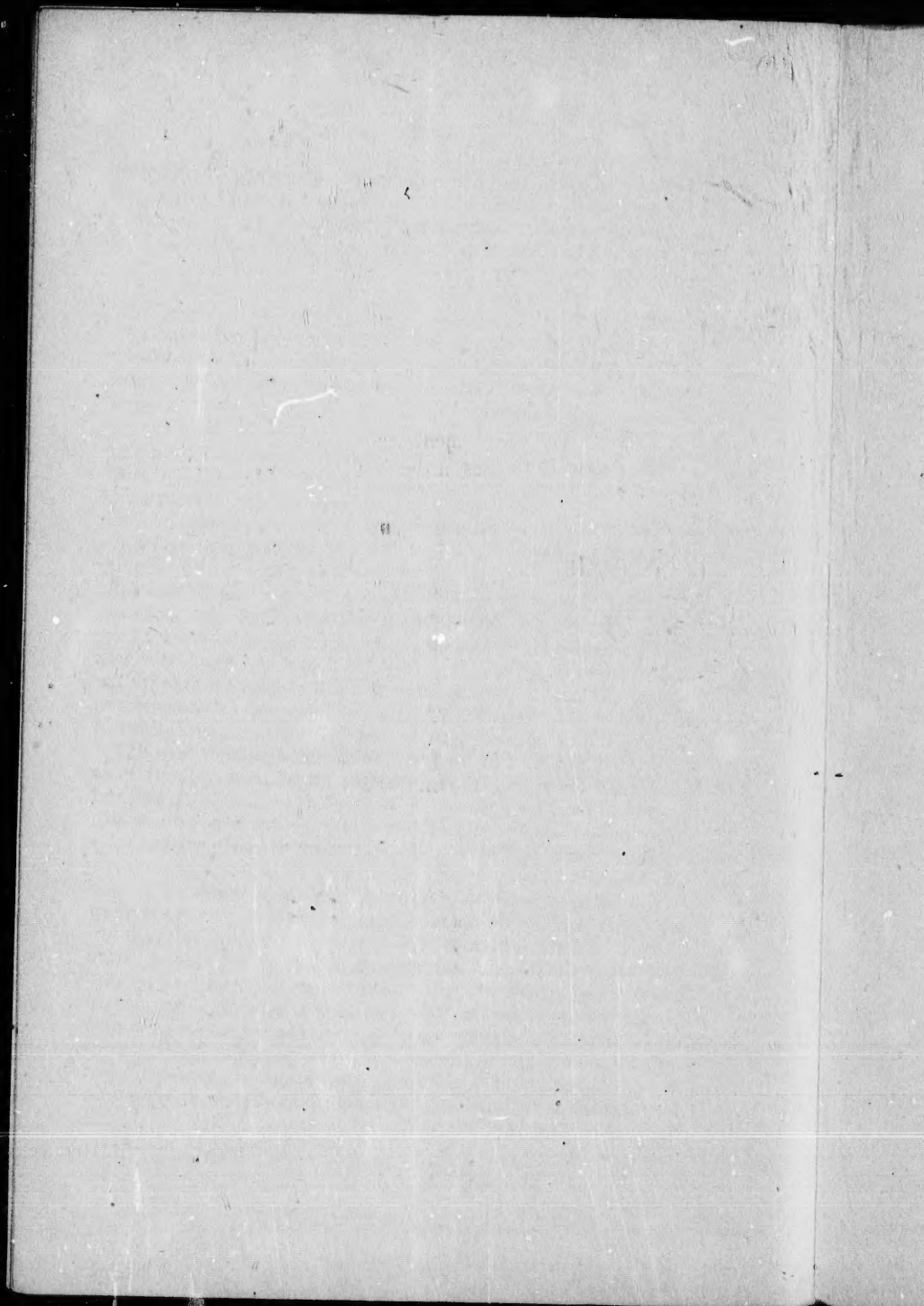
WHICH ?

With regard to the grand doctrine of "Life in Christ only," and an everlasting life of misery in hell, let any unbiased reader take up the Bible and carefully note all that is said about the two different views. If he be really anxious to find the truth and nothing but the truth, he will be surprised as I have been, to find how very much is said in favor of the former view, and how very little is said in favor of the latter. It hangs simply on a few isolated passages, while the former is found everywhere on the sacred page. The Bible is a new book to him who reads it in this new light, and much that was mysterious before will be plain and full of comfort. With me this subject has been a matter of careful study for many years, so that the conclusion I have come to has not been the result of excited haste, or in order to follow any popular feeling. I have read much and thought much on the subject, and have prayed to God for light that I might be saved from error and from misunderstanding and misinterpreting His holy word, which I revere and love, and prize more than all earthly treasures.

In closing this series of letters, I beg to say that they have not been written in an acrimonious, unkind or unchristian spirit, nor for the sake of controversy, but, I hope, in the interests of Christian truth and righteousness. I ask for a more tolerant and charitable spirit on the part of those who advocate the orthodox view, be they Professors, ministers, or private christians, for surely a man can hold the opposite view and still be a Christian. Let us have more brotherly toleration in our churches and "not judge one another any more," but in "meekness of wisdom" commend ourselves to others in the fear of God.

1885.

ENQUIRER.



It is the *moral* argument, that presses irresistibly on my mind—that which comes in the stupendous idea of eternity!

REV. JOHN FOSTER.

Some suppose that the soul is naturally immortal *** (this) is contradicted by Scripture, which makes our immortality dependent on the will of the Giver.

REV. RICHARD WATSON, (Wesleyan)

Institutes Vol. 1, page 82-83.

Our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and incorruption to light, through the Gospel.

2nd Tim. 1. 10.

The doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and the name, are alike unknown to the entire Bible.

OLSHAUSEN.

No such doctrine as the immortality of the soul is revealed to us.

ARCHBISHOP WHATELY.

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